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FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6061  
INFO RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 8276  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 2001  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 9497  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0432  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 1119

C O N F I D E N T I A L DHAKA 000105

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DEPT FOR SCA/PB, DS/IP/NEA-SA, SCA/EX

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: DHAKA UNIVERSITY TENSE AFTER PROFESSORS CONVICTED

REF: 07 DHAKA 1944

Classified By: A/DCM Jon Danilowicz, Reason 1.4(d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Hundreds of students protested at Dhaka University on January 22 after three professors were convicted of charges relating to violent unrest on the campus last August. As of 1600 local time the demonstrations involving several hundred people were peaceful but the situation was expected to remain tense while protesters awaited a government response to their demands that everyone charged in the August unrest be cleared. This is proving to be the first major test of the Caretaker Government since it underwent a major reshuffling of top officials earlier this month.END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) Dhaka University has been tense for several days as the trials of professors and students charged in the summer rioting came to a head. After days of sporadic small-scale protests, several hundred people, primarily students, demonstrated at Dhaka University on January 22 after three professors were convicted by a local court. As of 1600 local time the protests were peaceful. Although the President was widely expected to grant clemency to the convicted professors and others facing related charges, the protesters were demanding that all charges against the accused be erased. A group of teachers called on students, colleagues and friends to join a solidarity rally on January 23 at the university, while approximately 2,000 police remained deployed on and around campus. Adding to the uncertainty are plans by the head of government -- Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed -- to attend the World Economic Forum in Switzerland this week. Given the volatility -- and remembering how quickly the August protests turned violent and spread to other parts of the city and to major universities throughout the country -- Embassy Dhaka has restricted all but Mission-critical travel to Dhaka University and other government-operated universities until final resolution of the court cases.

13. (C) Comment: The court verdicts follow fast on a major reshuffle of the 11-member Council of Advisers that heads the CTG. The wholesale personnel changes were designed to boost the Government's popularity, which was flagging because of spiraling inflation and continued restrictions on political activity and other civil rights. The reconstituted Council clearly wants to quickly resolve the court cases in a manner that would diffuse tension and allow it to focus its full energies on creating an environment for free, fair and credible elections by the end of the year as promised. Success will depend not only on reaching a solution acceptable to the military-backed regime and the accused and their supporters. It will also depend on whether politicians will attempt to exploit the tension to undermine the

Caretaker Government that has thrown so many political party leaders in jail on corruption charges. The next few days may well go a long way in determining the new-look Government's effectiveness.

Rollins